



TOBACCO FREE KANSAS COALITION

Testimony in Support of HB 2231

Tobacco Free Kansas Coalition

15 March 2018

Chairman Johnson and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dr. James Gardner and I serve as a board member for the Tobacco Free Kansas Coalition, an organization dedicated to reducing tobacco use in our state. Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on HB 2231 which increases the tax on cigarettes by \$1.50 per pack and applies an equivalent tax on other tobacco products (OTP). In addition, the legislation sets aside an additional \$5 million for tobacco prevention and cessation, an important investment in reducing use and saving lives.

Tobacco use is the most preventable cause of death. We lose 4,400 Kansans each year to tobacco-related illness. There are also staggering health care costs associated with tobacco use. Within the Medicaid program alone, Kansans spend \$237.4 million every year on tobacco-related health care costs.

It is important to increase the tax by \$1.50 per pack because the health benefit only comes when there is a deterrent to purchasing. Lower amounts have little impact because the industry can provide coupons, reducing any price differential for consumers. Our most vulnerable populations are most responsive to tobacco tax increases including: children, pregnant women, and low-income populations. Particularly with children, price plays an important role in preventing them from initiating tobacco use. A \$1.50 increase will prevent 13,900 Kansas kids from ever starting smoking. 3,400 smoking-affected pregnancies and births will be prevented over the next five years. 18,600 adults would quit smoking.

Raising the tobacco tax is a win for all Kansans through additional state revenue, reduced health care costs and saved lives. Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Tobacco Free Kansas Coalition

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